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**A discussion of the elements of fantasy and children's literature
applied to *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *The
Magician's Nephew*, to conclude whether or not they are good
children's literature.**

by

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A minor dissertation submitted in *partial fulfilment* of requirements for
the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Afrikaans and Netherlandic
Studies

Department of Afrikaans and Netherlandic Studies

Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town

2002

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the
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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
GRADUATE SCHOOL IN HUMANITIES

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they are good children's literature (title of dissertation)

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DEDICATION

I would like to thank the University of Cape Town, especially the Afrikaans and Netherlandic Studies Department for their continued help throughout my studies. As well as give a heartfelt thank you to Dr Lydia Snyman, my supervisor, for all her support and advice. She helped me fully appreciate the beautiful and intricate art of children's literature.

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DESCRIPTIVE ABSTRACT

Using the principles of previous studies of children's literature and the psychological development of children^③, this work examines the literary texts, *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, to determine whether or not they succeed as good fantasy literature for children.

In the first section, "Building Blocks of Fantasy", the emphasis is on the accessibility of fantasy to children and adults, and the premise that one's connection with fantasy can be reactivated at any age because of previous experience.

The second section, "The Psyche of the Child", details the general development of a child, who falls into the category of intended reader of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *The Magician's Nephew*. This section bridges into section four, namely "The Psyche of the Character", which studies the main characters of each book in terms of natural development of the child and credibility when compared to the intended reader.

"Why Fantasy?" fits in between these two sections to contextualise the space in which the books have been written and in which the characters are being investigated. It establishes this investigation in terms of fantasy, which both books are. Fantasy as a medium is discussed, including structural criteria in order to succeed as fantasy; as well as discussing the place of fantasy in children's literature.

In section five, some of the literary aspects of the two books are taken into account and compared. As it has been established that children's literature is in fact literature, aspects like plot, characters, setting and language are discussed.

^③ based mainly on the theory of Dr Lydia Snyman – with permission

Section six, “Searching for Symbolism and Making Meaning”, although a literary technique, forms a separate section highlighting symbolism and meaning in the two texts. The presence and absence of symbolism is discussed and taken into account when establishing meaning in a text. The perception of symbolism by the child is also discussed, making a clear distinction between adult readings of symbolic texts and child readings of the same texts. Children do not have the mental capabilities of adults and use feeling and emotion rather than logic to judge and read texts.

The section titled “Morality and the Child” raises the existing issues of debate concerning morality in these two books, and considers each in turn. The morality represented must ultimately coincide with that of the child reader, and it is concluded that both authors, although in different ways, achieve this.

“To Be a Child Again” looks at why it is possible for adults to enjoy children’s literature and how fantasy and children’s literature can appeal to readers regardless of age.

The final section, “The Test of Time”, briefly considers classic literature and the pre-empting of classic literature. *The Chronicles of Narnia* have been popular with children and adults for 50 years, whereas *Harry Potter* is the most popular children’s series of the twentieth/twenty first century.

The conclusion that has been reached, taking all these aspects into account, is that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and *The Magician’s Nephew* do in fact succeed as good fantasy literature for children.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation will prove that *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* succeed as fantasy literature for children. I will discuss the aspects of fantasy and what literature of this genre must accomplish in order to appeal to and assist in the healthy development of a child's psyche. If, however, one of these two series (or both) is not suitable for children this will become evident during the discussion.

The questions that need to be looked at when determining the success of a fantasy story for children are:

- a) Does the fantasy in the two series link with the child reader's psyche?
- b) Do the stories link with the reader's psyche?
- c) Are the elements of fantasy believable in terms of good fantasy?
- d) Are there literary elements present that develop the story and offer literary value?
- e) Does the story itself uphold the child's knowledge of right and wrong/ good and evil?

To be able to ascertain whether or not a book is suitable for children one must first establish how a child develops mentally and physically at certain ages. The ages that need to be taken into account for this study are those of the intended reader of the *Harry Potter* and *Narnia* series. This will consist of an introduction to the different developmental stages – based on the theory of Dr Lydia Snyman – such as Middle Childhood, Late Childhood and Early Teens and how a child behaves during these stages. An important principle on which this dissertation is based is that people never forget their connection with fantasy and will always be able to reactivate it. This principle corresponds with the developmental stages of a child.

Once the state of the intended reader's psyche has been established, one must consider whether or not the literature in question corresponds with this development. Literature must link with the child's own development if it is to have value for the child. It is also very important that the child be able to relate to the book, its characters and settings, even if it is a fantasy story.

After establishing whether or not the *Harry Potter* series and *The Chronicles of Narnia* cater for the psychological and developmental needs of a child, the genre of fantasy needs to be discussed.

Often there is an erroneous belief that fantasy is not good for children because they cannot relate to it, or it is dangerous because it suggests things that aren't possible, like monsters and fairies. The only danger with fantasy is when it is incorrectly executed, in that there are flaws in the reality of the world created. When it comes to fantasy it needs to be as believable as reality. That is why all the aspects of the created fantasy world must gel together so that there are no loose ends or unanswered questions about how the world works.

To suggest that fantasy scares children because it allows them to believe in monsters is to suggest a child's imagination is limited. A child is involved with the endless possibilities of fantasy daily, without even opening a book, in their play. Fantasy is only dangerous to a child if its morality is not clearly established and defined. A child will not be scared if good wins over evil; if the dragon slayer kills the dragon. Being able to live themselves into the battle is harmless because it stimulates their creativity and imagination. They are safe in the knowledge that good is better than evil, and it confirms their beliefs of what is right and what is wrong.

When good does not defeat evil, however, it does not link with the child's experience of the world or his development, and this frightens him because he has no

understanding of such things. Morality will be discussed in a separate section of this dissertation and will relate specifically to *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *The Magician's Nephew*.

The discussion will include the advantages of fantasy as a mental stimulus and reasons for the authors using fantasy as a medium.

The literary value in terms of literary techniques, such as plot, characters (main and supporting), setting and language usage, will be considered. These aspects will determine whether or not these books succeed on literary merits, and not just on the construction of the fantasy and the consideration by the author of the psyche of the reader, when creating their stories.

It is also necessary to discuss the symbolism present in the two stories. This topic falls under literary considerations but bears more weight in assessing the success of the story, because it links with morality. In this section attention will be given to the way in which the authors use symbolism – or don't – to convey their message. Bearing in mind that this message is not always obvious when it comes to children.

This will be followed by the section on morality, and how the authors represent right and wrong, and good and evil to their readers. Consideration will also be given to the effectiveness of the chosen methods.

The final section will discuss the scope of the two series and success in terms of the aspects aforementioned. In this section the contemporary appeal of *Harry Potter* as well as the classic appeal of *The Chronicles of Narnia* will be discussed, and why these books are able to transgress age groups and appeal to more than just children.

After considering all these aspects of fantasy and children's literature it should lead to the conclusion that the *Harry Potter* and *Narnia* series are good fantasy literature for children.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF FANTASY IN CHILDREN

In chapter two of *Die Jeugboek* Lydia Snyman discusses the implications of literature. Paragraph 2.1, namely, “Literatuur word nie ontgroeï nie” is of utmost relevance to the discussion of fantasy and the experience of reading and interpreting fantasy. It says:

“Die feit dat verborge eienskappe in die mens weer geaktiveer kan word, beteken dus teoreties gesproke, dat die jeugdige geen kinderliteratuur ontgroeï nie, maar dat sy belewing daarvan anders sal wees as die gevoels- en konkreet-gebonde kind.”

“Die feit dat die mens literatuur nie ontgroeï nie, het die verdere implikasie dat die adolessent, byvoorbeeld, ‘n werk wat klaarblyklik uit die belewenisveld van die hoogpuberteit of vroegpuberteit geskryf is, toeganklik sal vind omdat die opvallende aspekte van ‘n vroeëre ontwikkelingsfase weer geaktiveer kan word”[pg.73].

This roughly translates into a concept where the developmental stages of a child can be compared to building blocks. Each phase is followed by the next, building on the original structure, adding to it and enhancing it, and often ultimately changing the form of the structure. But even when the structure is complete, or semi-complete, it still contains *all* building blocks. Nothing has been taken away in order to complete the structure, therefore none of the experiences of a child are lost and can be accessed at any time. For example a 15 year old can read literature aimed at 12 years olds and still be able to relate to it, and is likely to be able to add new meaning to the text because of her continuous growth and increased understanding.

This also implies that as an adult we still have access to the understanding and acceptance of ourselves as children, even though our interpretation of the world has changed.

THE PSYCHE OF THE CHILD

To fully understand how it is possible for a child to interpret and associate with fantasy one must first look at the child's development¹:

A child's personality is constantly developing as he or she experiences the world around him/her. Even before language a child's personality is being moulded. In the early stages of a child's life - the exact ages vary from child to child - but approximately 2½ – 3½ years, the child experiences his First Stubbornness Phase. Although quite taxing on a parent, this is an important phase because he is beginning to understand differences between “mine” and “yours” and is now aware of himself and his own will; his wants and desires. Hence the practice of wanting. He also realises he can control his emotions and no longer has spontaneous emotional outbursts. This is the most egocentric time in his life as he begins to test the waters of his immediate world – parents, family, home etc.

His desire for independence is also beginning to form. He wants to do things himself because he realises he has power, so he strives to do tasks and be bigger than he is. Often this can result in him realising just how incapable he is. So generally this is an unhappy time in a child's development. At the same time, though, he is learning to tell the difference between good and bad. Good is what his parents approve of and bad is what he is reprimanded for. But although he can tell the difference, it is still not a

¹ As interpreted from the works – namely *Die Kinderverhaal as Literatuur*, chapter 3 “Belewenisveld van die Kind” – and teaching of Dr Lydia Snyman. Terminology used by permission of the author.

question of conscience, this element of his personality only establishes itself in puberty.

The most important aspect of this phase, in terms of literature, is that a child of this age gives feelings to the world around him. Firstly, it means that he is driven by his feelings, many of his actions are not conscious choices. He is still learning his boundaries. But this also means that objects become animate through play. He can have conversations with not only a pet, but toys, flowers and even imaginary beings. This is his first interaction with the fantastical.

Just before school a child enters a peaceful, fun period in his development. Play becomes serious and he tries to imitate the work being performed around him, like mummy sweeping the floor or packing groceries away, or daddy bathing the dog. Although it is play it is very serious to him. He can now understand more and begins to understand concepts like yesterday, today and tomorrow. He can also discern between objects and appreciate more of his surroundings. He asks questions which allow him to arrange his world in a logical order. He is establishing the rules of the expanding world around him.

But he is still dependent on the concrete. His emotions drive him and he uses feelings to interpret the world around him because his intellectual development at this stage is slow and limited. He needs solid, irrefutable truth so he can understand – or more accurately, know – what things are and what is happening in his world. Because his understanding is so limited there is no room for abstract concepts². The reason being: what he can't understand, he fears. Because he is still strongly linked to his feelings and a fantasy world in which he can play - even though he is slowly beginning to separate his emotions from fantasy - he still creates magical forces to neutralise the

² which are adult, or more developed, concepts.

things he fears. This belief in the supernatural is especially strong between the approximate ages of 4 and 7.

This is probably the most important aspect of child development for literature. Without this belief and awareness of the supernatural³, literature would fail. This phase allows literature, in all its many forms, to exist. Nothing is impossible in literature because as a child one believes in more than just one simple reality. That is why fantasy is so successful in children's literature; children are equipped to accept and enjoy it.

At this stage they don't yet realise where fantasy ends and reality begins but to the child this is of little importance. They are equipped to accept it all and enjoy the experiences that evolve from this kind of literature. As the child develops further, however, he begins to understand the difference between fantasy and reality. At the age of between 6½ and 9 (the Middle Childhood Phase) the child already begins to discern between these two concepts. But his interest and enthusiasm doesn't diminish. He is still an avid believer in the fantasy *within* the book, because he used to believe and therefore still understands how fantasy works for him. Of course by the age of 9 most children have their own literary tastes, some will like fantasy and others won't, much like whether they like cornflakes or coco-pops, orange juice or apple juice. But naïve realism remains, as they still cannot fully grasp the reality of the "adult" world.

This establishes why it is possible for a child to enjoy fantasy. Because of a child's experience of the supernatural at such a young age, even when he is an adult he will be able to recollect – to an extent – some of the emotions from this time in his life.

³ The term "supernatural" meaning the possibility of an existence "above normal reality, explainable within the assumptions and inherited belief-systems of the realms depicted", as interpreted by Tzvetan Todorov. Quote by Todorov taken from Albert Wendland's *Science, Myth and the Fictional Creation of Alien Worlds*, pg. 56.

Therefore, this leads to the point that fantasy is accessible at any age, as long as a child has been able to experience this natural and harmless belief in the fantastical, he can call on his experiences and reactivate this connection between himself and “another world” at any time.

The argument being put forward in this paper is that literature, especially the genre of fantasy, acts as the catalyst for this recollection of previous experiences. That is why the release of *Harry Potter* not only found such a strong following with children, but with adults too. These books managed to reactivate their connection to a world where all things are possible.

Before discussing *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* in any further detail, the psyche of the reader – or intended reader – of these books needs to be established. To understand why *Harry Potter* is such a success one must understand exactly why it appeals to readers.

Harry Potter is primarily written for the 9 to about 12/13 year age group. This represents the Late Childhood Phase and enters into the Youth Period; perhaps it can be referred to as the Early Teens.

The Late Childhood years are those right before high school. It is one of the best times of growing up and defined by a general happiness. Physical development is complete and there is bodily harmony – until puberty. Children achieve and persevere at their best during this time. Things seem to be going right for them and they are focussed on their goals and own abilities. They are idealistic, seeing the good and bad in people. To a large extent, their values are based on external factors rather than internal factors, meaning they judge people or more correctly, respect and admire

people who appeal to what they want to be externally. This admiration is not based on moral qualities.

At this age children develop a critical institution so they are able to think about other people other than just themselves. But they are still anchored in the concrete and therefore their focus is on the concrete things in their lives, like musicians, actors and actresses, characters from books and movies, clothes, CDs, etc. Only later does abstract reasoning play a role in their decisions and everyday awareness.

Their self-awareness becomes stronger so there is a greater need for recognition and reassurance and they can now understand relationships and life rules. Things that were based on feelings before are now understood and their sense of reality develops further. In general it would appear as if these children have little empathy with others, but this is only because they themselves are relatively problem free.

The problem with this age group and literature is that these children are still not ready to have the adult world imposed on them through children's literature. The world of the adult is still out of their reach and understanding, especially because they are still bound to the concrete aspects of their lives.

Morality is another question that arises. Children at this stage in their lives have not yet developed their own code of ethics. They accept the morality of the community and therefore morality in literature can become problematic.

Taking a quick look at the Middle Childhood Phase will allow the reader to understand what changes the child has gone through until this point. Because as we established earlier, all these aspects can be activated later because they are a part of the child's being.

The age group in question is approximately: 6 ½ - 9

- a) Can't understand abstract ideas unless they are explained in concrete terms.
For example: love would be a hug or a kiss from a parent.
- b) Language abilities develop very quickly
- c) Can look at things from a distance and evaluate
- d) Senses develop
- e) Child is very active
- f) No longer so self-centred/ egocentric
- g) Likes to be part of a group of friends
- h) Work and play separated entirely at this stage
- i) Asks new questions, other than those asked in Early Childhood
- j) New realisation about power and abilities, often goes overboard and comes up short
- k) Changes in very dependent relationship with parents, needs friends now
- l) Has much admiration for teacher
- m) This period indicates the beginning of philosophical questions
- n) Real understanding of good and bad/ right and wrong
- o) Exposed to rules other than those of family, eg. school and church

Period before this: Lifetime of first physical change⁴ (5 ½ - 6 ½).

The other phase in question is the Early Teens. The ages differ and changes tend to be occurring earlier than before, but I will use the ages 11 to 13 for girls and 12 to 14 for boys.

This can be classified as the second stubbornness phase due to a physical and emotional/ spiritual crisis where the child is no longer small and not yet grown up. A child now has to break down all her pre-existing values in order to enable the growth of new values to match her changing world. This is also complicated by the fact that she is in between primary school and high school and her place in the world is changing, making her feel threatened. She is also searching for a group because she feels lonely and uncertain within herself. She has a strong sense of self that results in

⁴ Details in Addendum

feelings of disconnection, typically hypercritical feelings of inferiority, unhappiness and the catch phrase: “No one understands me.” This can develop into a feeling of narcissism, where she can’t decide if she loves herself or not, because of her feelings of inferiority. Many changes causing this uneasiness are leading her to her new identity as a young adult, but she is not yet ready to be an adult.

She can now experience abstract thoughts and ideas and for the first time there is an awakening of conscience within her. This is also the time of sexual awakening, which brings with it many difficulties and unexplained emotions that take years to resolve.

There is also a breaking down of old values and the building up of new ones. But even this causes tension as she doubts these new values because they aren’t fully formed.

Boys tend to rebel at this age, while girls overreact because their feelings are easily hurt.

Taking cultural development into account: in primitive cultures there is no stubbornness phase because these children grow up with a slow progression from responsibility to responsibility until they eventually reach the adult stage of responsibility. The same can be said for sexual development, these children mature physically, socially and emotionally at the same time and therefore there is no sexual tension, instead it is a natural stage in their lives. In a developed or developing society like that of South Africa, children reach physical maturity before they reach emotional maturity and therefore society places restrictions on them concerning sexual practices because, as opposed to their “primitive” counterpart, they are “not ready”.

At this stage of development children like ghost stories and thrillers or horrors. It acts to alleviate their own fear because by reading they can be afraid of something other than themselves.

Now that the psyche of the child who will be reading the *Harry Potter* series and *The Narnia Chronicles* has been established it will be easier to understand how a child reads these stories and what the child projects onto the books from he or she own experiences.

WHY FANTASY?

As has been noted in the above section on the development of the child, children have a natural affinity for fantasy stories because of their unquestioning belief in the supernatural from a young age. Fantasy is a part of their lives. As Freud said: “might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or, rather rearranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him?” [Freud in Armitt: 1996].

So when considering why creative writers use fantasy as their genre we come to the conclusion that it is because children connect with fantasy. Also, more things are possible in fantasy than in the real world, in fact, all things could become possible in a fantasy world. It is a place where the author sets up the rules and doesn't have to adhere to the laws of reason – as we have come to expect it in nature – when writing. As long as the new rules set in place by the author hold up when tested and do not undermine themselves at any point in the story.

It is also a good medium to stimulate the imagination of children, and create a place a child enjoys being a part of. The values of fantasy “are the values of imagination: as a means of conveying emotional or intellectual perception of truths not openly presented... ; and as release of the spirit of wonder and frolic that belongs to the eternal child within us” [Haines:198].

A writer would consider that a story must:

- a) mentally stimulate a child. A fantasy world offers new sights and sounds and offers the freedom that non-fantasy fiction can't.
- b) be an adventure or lead to a discovery (of self or other). Although adventures are possible in non-fantasy fiction it is often not far enough away from everyday life to be a truly imaginative adventure. Instead of knowing what everything looks like, or is before discovering it, the reader wants to be able to imagine it, and can do so just as he or she pleases in fantasy.
- c) be about them. Children need to relate to characters, they want to read a story as if they were a part of it; as well as have things in common with the characters they are reading about.

Fantasy encapsulates these aspects in a rich and new way. This is not to say that all fantasy is stimulating and that fiction, (as well as non-fiction) is not stimulating, but that fantasy has a different function. Fantasy stimulates the senses on a different level because the child must create the fantasy world for him/herself. The reader is exposed to new sights, sounds and experiences. "In structure and method it is often also a medium for experimentation in expression, for inventing word usage, for novel mechanics of narration or visualisation" [Haines:198].

But a writer would also consider, as Haines says in her chapter, "Spells, signs and symbols", on page 199 of *What's in a novel*, that the author's "[i]dea must be integrated with dramatic substance; subtlety of insight must be balanced with strong pictorial power; and both must be deftly controlled to focus on the writer's conscious purpose. [This] demands that consistent credibility within the frame of incredibility be maintained by writers." It is not a case of putting anything unrealistic down on paper

and expecting it to be fantasy. A child, especially, is a very discerning reader and an author needs to be aware of this. Creating a plausible and exiting new world is an art.

Although writers generally write the story that they are inspired to write and do not actively decide “I want to write a fantasy/ a romance/ an animal story”, they often have reasons for developing a fantasy world.

When JK Rowling talks about how Harry Potter was born, she tells that Harry walked into her head, fully formed. She started with “What if it were so?” and that was how the boy magician adventures began.

She says that some of her favourite stories as a child were fantasies. CS Lewis was in fact one of her favourite authors. Which implies that fantasy, even as an adult, is part of her life. At the time of creating Harry, her daughter was approximately 18 months old, meaning Rowling would have been introducing her to fantasy, and again she would find herself immersed in the world of fantasy - even if not in the literary sense of the word – experiencing it through her interaction with her daughter. In a sense this made it possible for her to revert back to a very basic form of seeing the world, accepting fantasy along with reality. (This is how Harry Potter works. His magical world works alongside our reality.) As parents, people become one of the strongest advocates for good literature because they do not wish their children to have access to literature that might be bad for them or corrupt their impressionable minds. But even Tolkien⁵ created his fantasy stories, not only with children in mind, but his own children.

⁵ Author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy.

Keeping this in mind, Rowling more than likely picked fantasy because it was, for her, the most exciting and expressive medium available. She wanted to tell a story that not only her readers could enjoy but that she could enjoy.

Lewis on the other hand picked fantasy for a specific purpose, only through fantasy could he deliver his message. Although he insists the stories started with a picture of a Faun carrying parcels in the snow, his vision was to create a relationship between children and religion. Fantasy was a convenient way of incorporating an adventure and a message. Lewis admits in *On Three Ways of Writing for Children* that writing fantasy “compels you to leave out things I wanted to leave out” [Lewis:28].

He too was inspired by children and dedicates *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to his Godchild, Lucy Barfield. In the dedication in the front of the book he writes:

“My Dear Lucy, I wrote this story for you, but when I began it I had not realized that girls grow quicker than books. As a result you are already too old for fairy tales, and by the time it is printed and bound you will be older still. But some day you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again... CS Lewis.”

Although both these stories are fantasies, it is clear that fantasy can have different purposes. Rowling and Lewis use fantasy in different ways to deliver their stories and in turn their message, which is how fantasy works according to Tzvetan Todorov. He defines fantasy in this way: Fantasy “deals with phenomena that are understood and explained within the context of the magical, religious, or mythic world present. Events here are *supernatural*, ‘above’ normal reality, explainable within the assumptions and inherited belief-systems of the realms depicted” [Wendland:56].

Both stories succeed as fantasy because within their own contexts, be it mythical for Rowling and religious for Lewis, they withstand the tests which make them not only fantasy but good literature as well.

THE PSYCHE OF THE CHARACTER

The character-driven *Philosopher's Stone*:

One of the most important reasons children enjoy Harry Potter is because they find solidarity with the characters, especially Harry, Hermione and Ron. Just as the readers can be classified by the phases of their development, so can the characters. Harry has been created to be exactly like a regular 11 year old boy. If we analyse Harry's character we can see many similarities between him and any other 10/ 11 year old.

Harry should be at the point in his development where he is the happiest but his home situation has affected this. His parents died when he was a baby and has to live with his aunt and uncle. The Dursely's make him sleep in a cupboard and treat him badly, so he has every reason to be miserable. His cousin, Dudley, is a bully and takes every opportunity to pick on him:

“‘Out of the way’ [Dudley] said, punching Harry in the ribs. Caught by surprise, Harry fell hard on the concrete floor.”

Even at school his misery continues:

“At school, Harry had no one. Everybody knew that Dudley's gang hated that odd Harry Potter in his baggy old clothes and broken glasses, and nobody liked to disagree with Dudley's gang.” [Pg. 27].

This is not an uncommon phenomenon at school. Many children become victims of bullies, making the school experience very unpleasant. But we notice that Harry isn't bitter, instead he hopes for something more in his life. "When he had been younger, Harry had dreamed and dreamed of some unknown relation coming and taking him away, but it had never happened." [Pg.27].

Now he is beginning to notice that strange things keep happening around him. These things are probably what the Dursely's dislike most about Harry. For example at Dudley's birthday at the zoo, Harry started a conversation with a Boa Constrictor. Although Harry doubted that this was possible he enjoyed the illusion. Then his cousin punched him out of the way so he too could see the snake.

"What came next happened so fast no one saw how it happened – one second, Piers and Dudley were leaning right up close to the glass, the next, they had leapt back with howls of horror. Harry gasped; the glass front of the boa constrictor's tank had vanished." [Pg.27].

But Harry can't explain these things that always seem to happen when he's around, they just happen.

Harry feels he is different, not only because of the strange occurrences and his belief that his life can't consist of only this; like most children his age, his feelings and observations are changing, and he's starting to doubt his place in the world. He feels that no one understands him – in his case it's because he's a wizard – but this is a general development at this age because so many changes are occurring at once, children feel isolated. How could an adult possibly understand what they are going through?

It is also the time between primary school and high school, so in the middle of all this inner confusion he has to go from a place where he feels totally comfortable and happy to a completely new environment to start making friends and adjusting all over again.

Because for Harry, the change is from a normal school to Hogwarts, a school in the magical realm, he is finally in a place he belongs, so the adjustment is not as horrifying as it could have been. And this offers some kind of hope for other young teens starting at a new school. He makes friends with Ron immediately and realises he does fit into his new environment when he is able to do a spell or ride a broom. He is also picked for the Quidditch team, a very prestigious achievement because first years aren't allowed to even have brooms at his school. This is any child's dream, to be the youngest person picked for the first rugby or soccer team out of all the "older" students because they are the best. This also nourishes Harry's need to feel accepted and discover himself.

Unfortunately Harry also has to put up with guys like Draco Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle, the Dudley's of his new school, to show that even he isn't immune to bullying. In one scene he has to rely on Scabbers the rat to save him because he can't defend himself. His humanity is revealed on another occasion as well:

"At the start-of-term banquet, Harry got the idea that Professor Snape disliked him. By the end of the first Potions lesson, he knew he'd been wrong. Snape didn't dislike Harry – he *hated* him." [Pg. 101].

"'Potter!' said Snape suddenly. 'What would I get if I added powdered root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?'"

Powdered root of what to an infusion of what? Harry glanced at Ron, who looked as stumped as he was; Hermione's hand had shot into the air.

‘I don’t know, sir,’ said Harry.

Snape’s lip curled into a sneer.

‘Tut, tut – fame clearly isn’t everything.’... ‘Let’s try again. Potter, where would you look if I told you to find me a bezoar?’

Hermione stretched her hand as high into the air as it would go without her leaving her seat, but Harry didn’t have the faintest idea what a bezoar was. He tried not to look at Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle, who were shaking with laughter.

‘I don’t know, sir.’

‘Thought you wouldn’t open a book before coming, eh, Potter?’” [Pg. 102].

Which goes to show, if you don’t do your homework you will get into trouble, no matter who you are. A few lines later he cheeks his teacher and gets a point deducted from his House – a very serious punishment – for his insolence. There are many instances in the *Philosopher’s Stone* where points are deducted from the characters Houses, for fighting or sneaking out of their rooms at night. They do, however, also get points added:

“‘There are all kinds of courage,’ said Dumbledore, smiling. ‘It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends. I therefore award ten points to Mr Neville Longbottom.’” [Pg. 221].

Rowling makes sure to add challenges her readers can understand and relate to. It is important not to give in to peer pressure even when it seems like fun. The moral rules she constructs in this fantastical “other world” are not that different from the rules of the natural, real world of the reader. In fantasy an author has the power to create an entirely new system of rules for the world she creates. In her world, Rowling has specifically chosen to keep the moral code the same so that her readers will be able to

relate to what the characters are doing and to an extent even aspire to do the right thing. As has been mentioned before, at this age a child aspires to be like some one they respect externally, and if they can admire Harry or Hermione or Ron they need to be characters that are ultimately good in every way – even if they are only “human”. Rowling, like all writers, is aware of this when creating her role-models.

And then there is the most exciting aspect of Harry at his new school and that is the possibility of adventure. A very strong sense for a need to discover has developed, especially in boys of his age, who often rebel to cope with their new feelings. In a way Harry does rebel, he disobeys the strict Hogwarts rules to try and solve the mystery of the Philosopher’s Stone, on more than one occasion. But it wouldn’t be an adventure story if he didn’t. And like many detective stories or teen thrillers, the characters have to investigate, often doing things they wouldn’t normally do, to solve the mystery. Rowling is also not trying to encourage her readers to misbehave, only to explore their imagination. At the same time, Harry’s adventures coincides with the reader’s curiosity to explore and have adventure in their own lives. They can transfer their own feelings onto the character who is able to be a part of something so exciting and experience the characters emotions, because they know exactly what he is feeling because he is just like them.

Looking at Hermione we can see the other side of the developing personality of an Early Teen that is not evident in Harry. Hermione is a good student, she’s comfortable with her intelligence and was presumably popular before attending Hogwarts. She is used to achieving and doesn’t want anything to interfere with her good grades. The reason for her not wanting to join Harry when he sneaks out of their dorm is because she has developed a conscience, unlike Harry and Ron who are yet to. Her conscience tells her that she is going to get into trouble; it might even be dangerous.

Only once Harry saves her is she prepared to put her conscience on hold, because they are friends, and for children of this age, friends are probably the most important part of their lives.

In a way Harry acts as a role model to readers who find themselves in a very similar situation to his – with the exception of the magic of course – his troubles are universal. There's going to be a school bully, there is bound to be at least one really nasty teacher that everyone hates, there are going to be rules that seem stupid, things that everyone *else* seems to know, there is bound to be homework and of course some previously unexplored fun. Harry makes the most out of his time at Hogwarts and what is Hogwarts really? A high school like any other. If Harry were not a magician he would go to a normal high school and instead of doing potions he'd do Chemistry, instead of learning about "One thousand magical herbs and fungi" he'd do Biology (he'd get to study fungi anyway), instead of magical theory he'd do Mathematics. Making a feather float would be much like testing for the presence of oxygen or carbon dioxide, and a test on the history of magic would be like taking a History test on the key role players in World War II or the democracy of South Africa.

It just happens the author has chosen a magical medium for the story to take place in. Certainly doing spells and learning about "Fantastic beasts and where to find them" is more exciting than reading about a kid doing Math and Physical Science.

And that really is the point. Rowling created a character and a world that would take readers out of their everyday lives and place them into a magical world where all things are possible. This displacement does not threaten reality because at eleven a child can tell the difference between fantasy and reality. Even at the age of six children "know characters in stories are not real... they [just] accept their existence as

real”[1980:220], and as I have said before, this previous ability to accept fantasy is drawn on at the age of nine, eleven or forty-three, when they read fantasy.

Lewis has his own opinion:

“[Fantasy] is accused of giving children a false impression of the world they live in. But I think no literature that children could read gives them less of a false impression. I think what profess to be realistic stories for children are far more likely to deceive them. I never expected [*as a child*]⁶ the real world to be like the fairy tales. I think that I did expect school to be like school stories. The fantasies did not deceive me: the school stories did. All the stories in which children have adventures and successes which are possible, in the sense that they do not break the laws of nature, but [*are*]⁷ almost infinitely improbable, are in more danger than the fairy tales of raising false expectations”[Lewis:29].

Any fictional book is to some extent a break from reality because the event or story hasn’t really taken place. A reader can appreciate that what they are reading is for their entertainment and if it orchestrates creative and imaginative experiences then it has succeeded as a story, because the reader is immersed in that world. And if a reader asks questions and has ideas once he or she are in that world it’s even better. As Ann Swinfen says in *Defence of fantasy*⁸, “Fantasy is thus an enrichment of life, for even if dragons exist only in the otherworld, our lives in the primary world are richer and more beautiful simply through the imagining of them” [1980:6].

Just as at school, children learn Math to teach them logic, reading teaches them creativity and introduces them to the power of their imagination.

⁶ Added for clarity.

⁷ Added for clarity.

⁸ Taken from *The Power of Story*.

The plot-driven *Magician's Nephew*:

Because *The Magician's Nephew* is a plot driven story the characters are not as fleshed out as in the *Harry Potter* series. In each instalment of *The Chronicles of Narnia* the story revolves around a different child or group of children. Each main character is well established in the story he or she is created for but because they appear for the duration of one story and do not appear again, Lewis could omit certain elements of characterisation that Rowling couldn't. He was also able to create a main character that suited each story. It also ensured that in each new story the reader was exposed to new character possibilities, new children would be waiting just inside the cover to lead them on the new adventure.

The main characters Lewis introduces in the *Magician's Nephew* are the protagonists Polly and Digory, and the lion, Aslan; and the antagonists, Digory's uncle and Jadis, who becomes known as the Witch. Of these characters, only Polly and Digory are images of the reader.

Just as with the *Harry Potter* stories, the main characters of *The Magician's Nephew* fit into a certain age group and are defined by their actions and personalities. Polly and Digory are the same general age as the intended reader. Although the readership age group for the Narnia series is approximately the same age group as for the Potter series, some of the techniques Lewis uses indicate that it is for a slightly younger age group, perhaps 8 to 11. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* the youngest child, Lucy, is quite young, (younger than the children in *The Magician's Nephew*), in the sense that she is still naïve, enjoys playing games and believes without question in the possibility of Narnia (probably the reason she is able to find it so easily). She prioritises acceptance over logic. These characteristics aren't absent in the Late

Childhood Phase but more common in Middle and Early childhood. Lewis also tends to focus on the concrete, like the children's hunger and them eating, even though he is dealing with a fantasy world. This reminds the reader of their similarity.

This doesn't mean that either Lewis or Rowling didn't want or expect younger or older readers to read their work, only that the main characters are most similar to this age group. Lewis himself writes on page 28 in *Of Other Worlds*: "...the neat sorting-out of books into age-groups, so dear to publishers, has only a very sketchy relation with the habits of any real reader". Anyone can read anything, good literature has no age guidelines. I only mention it because it makes understanding the intended reader easier, as well as the techniques used by the author to cater for the audience. Therefore for this purpose, the definition of the psyche of the intended readers of Narnia is very similar to that of Harry. Only the psyche of the Middle Childhood Phase is more pertinent (refer to page 6).

Earlier mention is made that Polly and Digory are the image of their readers. This comment is made not only because they are children and look like regular children, but because their emotional composition is the same.

Common to this age group is the need to have friends. Although Polly and Digory meet for the first time at the beginning of the story, there is enough of a similarity between the two of them that they become friends and the circumstances are favourable. It is school holidays and they don't seem to have any other friends in the area, they are also next door neighbours.

Digory is also naturally protective of Polly. He is prepared to stand up to his uncle because he was cruel to her, and tries to look after her in each new situation they face. As the boy, Digory is supposed to be the stronger of the two, the protector. And a boy

reader would not like to read about a girl who is the protector because she may appear to be more powerful.

Because the reader is at the age where he feels powerful and capable of almost anything, he is likely to try and do things that are perhaps unfamiliar to him, to experiment with his world and test its boundaries. Lewis establishes that they both enjoy make-believe and undertake to have an adventure when they “play” together. “Their adventures began chiefly because it was one of the wettest and coldest summers there had been for years. That drove them to do indoor things... indoor exploration.” [pg.13]. They decide to walk along the beams of the ceiling until they get to the house on the other side of Digory’s, which they know is deserted, so they can play, or more accurately explore further. When considering their course of action a reasonable, childhood fear presented itself to the children:

“... of course he was thinking, just as you would have been, of all the reasons why the house might have been empty so long. So was Polly. Neither of them said the word ‘haunted’. And both felt that once the thing had been suggested, it would be feeble not to do it.” [pg. 14].

Here we see that neither child is willing to back down because they don’t want to let the other see that they might be scared. There is a continued rivalry throughout the story, which acts to spur each other on and perhaps makes them braver than they are. The fact that they both consider that there might be ghosts refers to the authors understanding that children do have an inert link to the fantastical. This is how it is possible for the children not to question the possibility of Narnia. If they both believe that a house could be haunted then they clearly believe in the supernatural.

Not only do the characters believe in fantasy, but at this age, so does the reader. It adds spice to his life, even though he can distinguish between the two and will not

read this passage as unrealistic. He has these very fears, besides, things really do go bump in the night. And as I said before, what children don't understand they explain with the supernatural.

Children of this age group are characteristically firm believers in their own capabilities with little consideration of consequences. Polly and Digory act in the same way. Once the children are forced into the Wood between the Worlds by Digory's evil uncle, Digory comes up with the theory that the pools might be doorways to other worlds and is eager to continue the adventure. Polly is instinctively nervous – but not because of what another world might be like but because she has to be sure she get home when she needs to.

“‘I’ve just had a really wonderful idea,’ said Digory. ‘What are all the other pools?’...’Why, if we can get back to our own world by jumping into *this* pool, mightn’t we get somewhere else by jumping into one of the others? Supposing there was a world at the bottom of every pool.’” [pg.36].

“‘Look here,’ said Polly, ‘I’m not going to try any new pool till we’ve made sure that we *can* get back by the old one.’

Polly shows that she is sure of her own capabilities in dealing with another world, as long as she can get home. Neither of them stop to consider that the world they enter might be the complete opposite to Earth or dangerous. A comment by the narrator about Digory confirms this attitude: “but he was too wild with curiosity to think about that...” [pg.49].

But Digory is also prepared to take responsibility. When Aslan tells him to undertake the task to bring back the apple, he carries it out. The Witch tempts him to disobey the task but he sticks by what he knows is the right thing to do. Children this age know right from wrong, and aren't likely to disobey someone they respect and admire.

Because Digory knows Aslan is good, he will strive to please him and earn his approval. Just like a child with his or her teacher, or older siblings, or friends.

Lewis creates his child characters to be essentially good, but human. They make mistakes, but are prepared to admit to them when they do. The most important characteristic of the children is that they are innocent.

LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS:

To be able to consider a work of literature as good, certain aspects of good writing need to be present. For example, there needs to be a plausible plot, good writing, including humour, irony or other language techniques, and there needs to be an underlying message or theme.

Lydia Pienaar already established in her study *Die Kinderverhaal as Literatuur* that children's literature is in fact literature. Using this as a basis, a discussion of such elements in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *The Magician's Nephew* will follow, to establish their literary worth. Bearing in mind that when considering children's literature there are certain elements of adult literature that cannot be applied in its writing. Because children are dependent on the concrete there is no room for concepts like postmodernism.

In the *Harry Potter* and *Narnia* stories the following literary criteria will be considered:

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? (PLOT IN OTHER WORDS)

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone:

Harry lives with the Dursley's, his only family, because his parents died when he was one. They told him his parents died in a car accident when they actually were killed by the evil Lord Voldemort. The Dursley's hate magic and anything supernatural, so

they never told Harry his mother was a witch and his father a wizard. On his 12th birthday he discovers he is a wizard, when a giant arrives to tell him he has been accepted into the most famous School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He also finds out who his parents were and that they have left him enough Knuts (magic money) to support him. He then leaves his horrible family for the boarding school, Hogwarts. He makes friends with Ron Weasley immediately, enemies with Draco (because Harry wouldn't deny his friendship with Ron), and later friends with Hermione, the most intelligent first year at Hogwarts.

Harry is also hailed as famous because Voldemort could not kill him, but left a scar in the shape of a lightning bolt on his forehead.

Being new to the magical world he absorbs all the information he can about it and soon he discovers a mystery. He is drawn into solving the mystery of the Philosopher's Stone and picks up on clues others can't see or don't want to. After solving a series of puzzles with the help of his two new friends, Ron and Hermione, (and being picked for the Quidditch team), he has to do battle with one of Voldemort's evil followers. In the end he triumphs over Professor Quirrell – the most unsuspected culprit. He also helps his House win the end of year trophy.

The story takes place over one year, as does each of the Harry Potter stories. In this story Harry has to adjust to his new environment and the knowledge that his parents were not who he thought they were. Just as Harry is orientating himself in this new magical dimension, so is the reader. Just as Harry's head swims with images of hags and vampires – things he knew before to be fairy tales – so must the reader adjust to their existence in Harry's world. It also is a comprehensive introduction to the character that will be leading the reader through each one of the seven books in this

series, namely Harry. This story serves to establish who Harry is and where he comes from, as well as the tension and fight between good and evil. It is also a semi-Cinderella story:

- a) Harry is ill-treated by the people who are supposed to love him.
- b) Magic, in the form of the letters that keep arriving and Hagrid (a bearded giant), who represents the supernatural world waiting for him, rescues him.
- c) He discovers he is famous and rich.

What is interesting is that Rowling limits Harry's good fortune to the magical dimension. Harry must return at the end of the school year, for the vacation, to the Dursley's. The children are given strict instructions that they may not use magic in the Muggle world. So in reality Harry is as powerless as he was before, just like any other child. In the parallel dimension Harry can accomplish anything, comparable to a child when they are reading.

The Magician's Nephew:

Digory's father is in India and his mother is very ill, so he and his mother have to move to London so that his aunt and uncle can look after her. Digory meets Polly, his uncle's next door neighbour, while trying to get away from the house. He thinks his uncle is mad and can't stand seeing his mother dying. Digory and Polly become friends and one day while they are playing, they discover Digory's uncle's secret room. Uncle Andrew believes he is a magician, but can't solve the mystery of the magical rings he was given by a real witch. He knows the rings take you out of this world and into another, or at least somewhere else, but that is all, so he tricks Polly and makes her disappear. Digory undertakes to find her, taking both the green and the yellow rings with him. The children find themselves in the Wood between the

Worlds, a beautiful, peaceful place with pools of water. But pools are portals to other worlds and if they are entered while the children are wearing the green rings they get transported to these other worlds.

Wanting to explore these new possibilities they step into a pool and are transported to Charn. Here they release Jadis, the cruel Empress, whose pride has killed her world. Trying to escape, because the world is crumbling around them, they take Jadis back to London with them. There, she uses her powers and runs amok. Realising their mistake the children try and return her to Charn and end up taking her, Uncle Andrew (who has become her servant), the Cabby, his horse and themselves to the Wood between the Worlds. Once there, the horse tries to take a drink from one of the pools and ends up transporting them to Narnia – a world being created as they arrive. This is a strange new world because Aslan, who is responsible for creating the world, is a lion. The children instinctively know that Aslan is good and they respect him. This world is also populated by normal animals, talking animals and mythical creatures.

But Aslan tells the children they have brought evil into Narnia, in the form of Jadis, and they have to go on a quest to redeem themselves and protect Narnia against her. The quest is to bring back an apple from a garden far away, locked behind golden gates. Once there, with the help of Fledge (the Cabby's horse with wings), Jadis tries to convince Digory to keep the apple for himself. She says that he should take the apple and give it to his dying mother to heal her. But Digory is strong, he follows Aslan's instructions and returns with the apple. Which he must then plant as protection against Jadis – who has eaten an apple from the garden and become known as the Witch. Aslan then rewards him for his obedience and allows him to take an apple to his mother, to temporarily heal her. The children go back home. The Witch stays to try and rule Narnia, the Cabby is made king and his wife queen of Narnia and

the horse becomes one of the animals. Back home Digory gives his mother the apple to eat and then plants the core in the garden, where it grows into a large tree. Years later Digory has the tree made into a large wardrobe, after it topples in a storm, and keeps it in his house. Hence, creating a portal to Narnia.

In this story Lewis establishes Narnia. Because *The Magician's Nephew* was not originally the first of the series, Lewis tried to give a comprehensive introduction to the existence of Narnia and how the children managed to find it in the first place. He ties up the loose ends that posed questions in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, (originally the first book). He also established a pattern of good versus evil that feature in all seven books in the series.

CHARACTERS IN HARRY POTTER

We can split the characters in Harry Potter into two main groups: main characters and supporting characters, which in turn can be split into a further two groups: realistic and fantastical. If we compare the initial two groups we notice a distinct difference: the main characters, namely Harry, Hermione and Ron are human in description. They have two eyes, one nose, ten fingers and toes etc., they look, dress and speak like regular children. As can be noticed with all the learners and teachers at Hogwarts who make up the realistic category of supporting characters. They are originally from the Muggle world – the world of non-magical folk – our world, and therefore look just like Muggles (humans). The only thing that separates them from Muggles is their magical powers.

The fantastical supporting characters populate the magical world of Hogwarts and generally do not take on the form of children or people. They consist of ghosts, giants, goblins, centaurs and other animals, mythical and magical creatures. These characters complement the new world Rowling has created, parallel to and bridging into the real world, helping to define the rules of this world and allowing the reader to create images of these new creatures. These fantastical characters of Harry very rarely have a leading role because, as convincingly as they are created and as recognisable as they might be – children have a good idea what trolls or dragons look like from other exposure to them – they are more difficult for the reader to relate to. It is the humanity of the main characters that is the strongest link between reader and character.

When Harry goes with Hagrid to Gringotts Bank he learns that goblins run the bank. Hagrid gives him his first lesson on “other” creatures:

“Never mess with goblins, Harry. Gringotts is the safest place in the world for anything yeh want ter keep safe...”[pg.50].

Harry also meets centaurs in the Forbidden Forest. Firenze is named as a centaur, telling the reader he is a mythical creature and then describes him with “white-blonde hair and a palomino body” and “astonishingly blue eyes, like pale sapphires”, giving him a human quality. He can also speak and helps Harry out of danger.

CHARACTERS IN *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA*

When we consider the characters who exist in Narnia, there are again two distinct categories: characters unique to Narnia and characters from Earth. Although the stories take place primarily on Narnia, the main characters are children from Earth, (our reality). These children are created in the image of the intended reader, they are

ordinary boys and girls in every way. Unlike Harry, there is nothing supernatural about them, they just happen to discover a portal to another world or dimension.

Other than the children, the important characters – ones with speaking and roles that contribute to plot – are Aslan, Jadis, Uncle Andrew, the cab driver, (and his horse to some extent). Aslan is the creator of Narnia, the king. The children have great awe and respect for him, as do everyone who come in contact with him. The reader could make a subconscious association between Aslan and a popular teacher. At this age the readers would try to model themselves after someone they found externally attractive, in the sense of powerful, or good. Aslan had been created as archetypically good and can be recognised by the reader as someone good and powerful.

Jadis on the other hand, is called a Witch because she is the archetype of evil. She comes from the world Charn, where she was the queen. It is described as a horrible, cruel place. When she enters Earth, she tries to use her powers to rule. In Narnia she is not prepared to listen to Aslan's rules and is preparing herself to rule Narnia (as we see has happened in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*). Aslan is the representation of good and Jadis, of evil. All the other characters are at differing levels in between.

The cab driver is essentially good, hence he is made the King of Narnia, and his wife, the queen. Digory's uncle, Uncle Andrew, on the other hand is in the employ of Jadis. He is cruel to Polly and does not accept the magic of Narnia.

I mentioned the cabby's horse, Strawberry, because Aslan turns him into the first pegasus and names him Fledge. Fledge makes it possible for the children to carry out their task for Aslan. And Strawberry is actually the reason the children end up in Narnia, if he didn't drink from the magical pool they would never have been transported to Narnia.

There is a mixture of subordinate characters, ranging from Earth animals to mythical creatures. The animals, unlike on Earth, can speak. Although the privilege of speech is only granted to some animals. But when the children arrive in Narnia, the world is new, so the speech of the animals is very naïve, almost primitive. The following quote not only shows this but gives an idea of the other creatures in Narnia:

“‘And now,’ said Aslan, ‘Narnia is established. We must next take thought for keeping it safe. I will call some of you to my council. Come hither to me, you the chief Dwarf, and you the River-god, and you Oak and the He-Owl, and both the Ravens and the Bull-Elephant. We must talk together. For though the world is not five hours old an evil has already entered it.’...

The others all began talking, saying things like ‘*What* did he say had entered the world? – A Neevil – What’s a Neevil? – No, he didn’t say a Neevil, he said a weevil – Well, what’s that?’”[pg.111].

The animals do not know what evil is, because they were created without any evil. It is also like a child assigning a matching sign and signifier. Evil is abstract, it can’t be seen in the literal sense, touched, tasted or smelled, therefore it is difficult to understand. If the animals were still “young” they would be the same as young children, and would need a concrete sign to represent the word.

It is also a bit of humour. A reader would know what evil is and the animal’s misunderstanding of the word is funny, and shows their naivety.

Lewis also used other characters like nymphs and satyrs, mythical characters he has brought to life as part of Narnia. Because Lewis believes it is important to believe in fantasy and fantastical creatures, he might also be saying that these creatures exist, it just depends if you can see them or not.

THE WORLDS OF THE FANTASY

Both stories I am discussing deal with a movement of characters between two worlds. One world is our reality, Earth, as we know it, and the other is a fantasy world or dimension. When the characters are on Earth they abide by the laws of nature, as they are understood, it is only when they cross over into the fantasy world that new possibilities present themselves. Both authors have made an attempt in this way to separate fantasy and reality. As if to say, don't expect these fantastical things to happen in everyday life; fantasy belongs in its own space.

The real world that both authors establish is that of England. The children in both stories are British and are shown in the natural British environment, for example, the rainy summer that causes Polly and Digory to stay inside in *The Magicians Nephew*. Also on page 53 of *The Philosopher's Stone*: "Harry had never been to London before. Although Hagrid⁹ seemed to know where he was going, he was obviously used to getting there in an ordinary way. He got stuck in the ticket barrier on the Underground and complained loudly that the seats were too small and the trains too slow."

In *The Philosopher's Stone*, Rowling tries to relate her fantasy dimension, which is a part of London, but not visible to Muggles, to the real London. Notice the juxtaposition of the fantasy and the real: "They say there's dragons guardin' the high-security vaults... Gringotts is hundred of miles under London, see. Deep under the Underground." [pg.51]. And again on page 55, Hagrid takes Harry to London pub called "The Leaky Cauldron", alongside a big books shop and a record shop. Outside the pub in the walled courtyard:

⁹ who is a giant

“Hagrid...was counting bricks in the wall above the dustbin. ‘Three up...two across..’ he muttered. ‘Right, stand back, Harry.’ He tapped the wall three times with the point of his umbrella. The brick he touched quivered – it wiggled – in the middle, a small hole appeared – it grew wider and wider – a second later they were facing an archway large enough even for Hagrid, and archway on to a cobbled street which twisted and turned out of sight. ‘Welcome to Diagon Alley.’”

Of course there has to be a space for the transition from the one world to the other to take place. Generally in The Narnia Chronicles it is the journey through the magical wardrobe, that is made out of wood originating in Narnia, that they can get to Narnia. In Harry Potter, it is walking through Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$, which is at the train station between Platform 8 and 9, that takes him to Hogwarts. In the above quote we can see there are also other ways of getting into the magical parts of London, like Diagon Alley.

In *Science, Myth and the Fictional Creation of Alien Worlds*, Albert Wendland categorises the different alien worlds that authors create in fantasy and science fiction. One of the categories he supplies is “Natural Conceptual Worlds”, these worlds are alien but relatively earth-like. This description can be applied to the world of Narnia. Although Narnia is not Earth, just as Charn is another, wicked, planet, it is still entirely recognisable. When Digory is sent on his quest to bring back the apple of wisdom, he and Polly see much of the landscape of Narnia and all of it is describable in terms that are familiar to children:

“All Narnia, many-coloured with lawns and rocks and heather and different sorts of trees, lay spread out below them, the river winding through it like a ribbon of quicksilver...on their left the mountains were much higher...between

steep pine woods... a great barrier of cliffs rose before them and they were almost dazzled by the sunlight dancing on the great waterfall... The air grew colder, and they heard the call of eagles far below them... they could see tiny-looking jagged mountains appearing beyond the northwest moors, and plains of what looked like sand far in the south.” [pg.136]

All the items mentioned here can be found in one part or another of the world, there is nothing profoundly new as far as setting is concerned even though Lewis had all the freedom he wanted because Narnia is a new, fantasy world.

To continue this idea that Narnia is a natural conceptual world the animals must be mentioned briefly. Narnia is inhabited by animals, some that can talk and some that can't, but all of those encountered in *The Magician's Nephew*, that are indigenous to Narnia are Earth animals. Lewis makes mention of the following animals on page 106 and 107 of *The Magician's Nephew*: frogs, panthers, leopards “and things of that sort”, “showers of birds”, butterflies, deer, beavers, elephants, rabbits, moles, etc. He also gives the animals one of two recognisably Earthly qualities, talking or natural animal noises: “cawing, cooing, crowing, braying, neighing, baying, barking, lowing, bleating, and trumpeting.” [pg.106].

One thing Lewis does change, however, is certain natural/biological rules. In chapter thirteen we see that the toffee the children planted turns into a toffee tree, in the same way the lamp-post became fixed in the ground and “the bar off the lamp-post turned into a little light-tree”. [pg.140].

Lewis also sets up scientific rules to go with the creating of his world. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Lewis introduces his scientific reasoning for how time is affected when travelling to Narnia. When Lucy goes through the wardrobe and into Narnia, she is there for hours but on returning to Earth, she has only been gone

moments. The children's uncle, Professor Kirke (Digory from *The Magician's Nephew*) tries to explain this occurrence:

“- if...she had got into another world, I should not be at all surprised to find that the other world had a separate time of its own; so that however long you stayed there it would never take up any of *our* time” [pg.48].

Lewis tries to give a scientific reason for the working of his fantasy world, whereas Rowling does not give explanations for how it is possible that the Magical dimension exists and how it is possible to get there – her reason is simply that it is magic.

Lewis needed to create a new world/planet in order for him to accomplish two things: one was he needed a place where it was possible for a Faun to be walking in the snow, with presents under his arm¹⁰. And two, he needed an environment in which to create a Christian allegory that children could enjoy. He did not want to tell the Christian story in a conventional setting that children would be able to label, he wanted to make it new. At the same time he didn't want to make it too abstract or unrecognisable, or children might not be able to relate to the places or understand the story.

For the *Harry Potter* series, however, Rowling did not create a new planet on which to set her story. She did want two specifically distinct worlds or environments for the stories to take place in, but she didn't want to remove one from the other. Instead she created a parallel dimension in which the magical adventures take place. Both worlds are in the same place, namely Earth – more specifically England – only Hogwarts can't be seen or accessed by Muggles because they are not magical.

Once in the magical parallel world, there are noticeably phenomena that do not occur

¹⁰ Documented as the first image he had of the *Narnia* stories.

in our experience of Earth. Phenomena that one would expect would be possible in a magical representation of Earth. Essentially the landscape is earthlike – because it is still Earth – only the rules have changed to suit the magical environment. For example, staircases move by themselves, the rules of photographs change (images in photographs are not fixed, they can move in and out of the frame as they please to prevent them from getting bored).

If we look at the animals in *Harry Potter*, we notice that earth animals are realistic in that they cannot speak and act quite conventionally, for example Scabbers the rat (in *The Philosopher's Stone*), Hedwig the owl and Mrs Norris, the cat. It is the mythical, newly created animals, which appear as speaking characters in the stories.

Something both authors strictly abide by in the creation of their worlds, is replicating the moral code of reality. There is a distinct division between right and wrong, and good and bad. They may play with the concept of time and space, defy the laws of gravity and combine myth and reality but the laws of right and wrong are adhered to. The reason for this being the child's need for confirmation that the morals he or she strives to uphold are correct. This discussion will appear under the heading Morality and the Child – the Debate.

LANGUAGE OF THE WORLDS

Rowling also takes the opportunity to play with words. She creates new objects and names them, for example:

“It seemed to be a silver cigarette lighter. He flicked it open, held it up in the air and clicked it. The nearest street lamp went out with a little pop. He clicked it again the next lamp flickered into darkness. Twelve times he clicked the Put-Outer...” (pg.12).

She offers a description a reader would recognise and then gives it a new function and a new name to match. The technique combines words that already exist to make something new, like the “Remembrall”. It is a ball that ensures you remember things, so it is a compound word consisting of “remember” + “ball”.

There is a sense of sound in many of the words she uses. Musical words have a strong appeal for children. That is why it is important when writing for young children, to use sounds and rhythms because their ears will pick it up and remember it. *Harry Potter* is often read to school classes and is successful as a read-a-loud book because of these qualities. She also makes use of implication in the words she chooses, for example the name of one of the four Houses is Slytherin. All the bad guys come from Slytherin, (not to mention the most feared and evil wizard, Voldemort). The name immediately brings images of a snake to mind as well as the negative connotations associated with a snake.

Because at Hogwarts the children practice magic, there have to be magic spells and words which make them. The language Rowling created has a Latin sound and appearance but are more than likely not Latin. On checking Latin dictionaries I found that the letter “w” is rarely used, and only in Old Latin. “Gardium” is in fact a word but certainly wouldn’t produce the desired effect in a spell. The words for one spell are: “Wingardium Leviosa”. These words lead a reader to think of “wing” and the “levi” could imply “levitate” because that is what an object does when these words are spoken. To add to the use of words and sound, an emphasis is placed on the correct pronunciation of the words because if it isn’t spoken correctly it will not work. The children also make potions at Hogwarts. These are some of the ingredients of a “simple potion to cure boils”: dried nettles, snake fangs, horned slugs and porcupine quills. In one of the scenes the class is filled with acid green smoke and Neville is

covered in “angry red boils” because he added the porcupine quills before taking the cauldron off the fire.

Because of Lewis’s very earthlike construction of Narnia he doesn’t make much use of language and naming techniques. His primary interest is the story and its meaning, rather than aesthetic entertainment. The entertainment should be in reading and making meaning.

SEARCHING FOR SYMBOLISM AND MAKING MEANING

Symbols are representations of things, i.e. events, people, ideas, etc., that are not explicitly named in a text. Their function is to allude to a second meaning or underlying meaning. Symbols are indicators of what a writer is really trying to say in his text, his message. This message may or may not be linked to the surface meaning, if a surface meaning is even indicated.

Take Roahl Dahl for example, his stories are humorous tales, often with animals as main characters, designed to make children laugh. The only message he is trying to convey is that people do silly things and that good wins at the end of the day. Of course, an adult can read as much as they like into stories like these. Consider for example the complaint that the *Noddy* series is bad for children because Noddy is homosexual; or that Ferdinand the bull is homosexual because he refuses to take part in the bull fight and would rather smell flowers. This logic does not stem from a young child who would be reading these stories, because ideas like homosexuality are not yet part of their experience of the world. Young children are confined to their homes, perhaps a play school environment, and this is their world so adult views are

not imposed on them. At the same time young children are free of prejudice because of their innocence. Even if a parent did talk openly about homosexuality, a child would accept the information as neither good nor bad because of their limited understanding. It therefore would not change the reading experience for the child.

Certainly Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* and other works, even though they are fantasy, deliver no commentary on the world, there is no added value just below the surface. Except, perhaps, that it gives power to characters they did not have before, like Little Red Riding Hood wearing a wolf's skin, and to be revolting. It is a satirical and comical alteration of popular fairy tales – which may or may not have had their own underlying meaning before he fiddled with them.

Therefore the assumption can be made that some children's stories have no hidden meanings. This is especially true of literature for young children in the early reading stages. There are of course instances where authors do use symbolism in picture books, such as Freda Linde's *Die Keiserkroon*. But mainly these stories are affirmations of what is taking place in their own development and the world around them. It might serve to confirm their experience of right and wrong, or happy or sad, but cannot be dissected to the extent that there is another meaning being relayed to the child simultaneously.

For children in the Middle and Late Childhood Phase¹¹ it is easier for writers to include a second, simultaneous meaning. But once again, this meaning cannot be located and picked out by the reader. A child *is* sensitive to features like these in writing, and has the ability to absorb all the information in a text and on a certain level, but he or she would not be able to name it, and would therefore not be aware of its existence. The older children get, however, and the more experience they gather,

¹¹ Terminology and developmental theory based on Lydia Snyman's work on Children's Literature.

the easier it becomes for them to notice and name these elements. By the time they are adults, they will not be able to read a text without noticing the underlying meanings and literary techniques a writer uses.

But again I must make the claim that not all texts have underlying meaning, take adult literature for example: popular fiction more often than not merely has entertainment value. Stephen King or Piers Anthony supply the reader with a story – often these books are described as reading matter that doesn't take a lot of brainpower to read, or similar books are called easy reading or even "airport reading". This is because the content doesn't require the reader to apply their analytical thought processes to it. They are just able to read the story and enjoy it without analysing it. Therefore to say that there must be an underlying meaning in children's literature would be unfair.

This is often the reason adults misinterpret children's literature. They are dissecting children's stories using analytical, theoretical and logical thinking when reading them. These thought processes are not available to children when they are reading, they simply absorb the story without analysing it. A child is able to rate their enjoyment of a book based on their appreciation of the characters, setting and plot.

Children do not read in search of implied meaning or notice the existence of symbols or hidden meanings – at 9 a child doesn't even know what a literary symbol is, only later will he be taught, at school, to read a text with literary elements in mind. Children do, however, have the ability to *feel* the text, its tone and often its meaning without "understanding" what they are feeling. They feel what is moving below the surface of the text.

Symbolism in Harry Potter:

There is no evidence in the *Harry Potter* stories that lead to the conclusion that there is a hidden or intended meaning that is not evident from the surface reading. The *Harry Potter* stories represent the clash between good and evil. Lord Voldemort is the ultimate evil. He corrupts other wizards and when he cannot convert them to the Dark Arts, he kills them. He has no respect for goodness.

Albus Dumbledore on the other hand is a representation of good. He is the headmaster of Hogwarts and the only wizard to survive a fight against Lord Voldemort – other than Harry, even though Harry was just a baby at the time. He gently leads Harry to do the right thing and acts as his role-model.

Hagrid also represents good, although he is fallible, he is gentle, compassionate and loves Harry.

Professor Quirrell is the antagonist in *The Philosopher's Stone*. He is in the employ of Voldemort and carries out evil tasks to facilitate Voldemort's return. But Harry stops him, with the help of his friends, and good triumphs over evil.

Harry represents goodness because of his youth and his desire to do the right thing. Like a child of his age, he knows the difference between right and wrong and what Quirrell is doing, is wrong. Harry is able to beat Quirrell because he has a good heart and is human – he has qualities that evil cannot have, like love, compassion, remorse etc. Harry also practices white magic, which shows the reader that he is not practising the same evil magic Quirrell and Voldemort do.

The message in this story is simply that when good meets evil, good will win. The characters represent nothing more than good and evil, a sound message that children can understand and relate to because of their own psychological development.

Of course this doesn't mean that children's literature cannot and does not have symbols and underlying meanings. These elements in children's literature are what set them apart from other texts because they have substance.

If one looks at *Ken jy die Kierangbos* by Frieda Linde, on the surface it appears to be a story about birds who dare to enter a forest many animals are afraid of, who get lost and discover the cripple boy, that everyone talks about, because he has the ability to heal sick animals. But on closer inspection it is an allegory, where the cripple boy represents Jesus and the Kierangbos is the belief in Jesus. This story subtly approaches the subject and only in a few places do the words and image usage reveal, by implication, this meaning of the story.

The Chronicles of Narnia on the other hand, is far less subtle when expressing religious views. As is mentioned above, this doesn't mean that children are able to notice it by themselves. (It is just glaringly obvious to adult or older readers.)

To understand Lewis's overt¹² use of symbolism and inferred meaning, one must look at CS Lewis, the man, for answers. Lewis was a religious man, and evident in many of his letters, articles and non-fiction writing, was his preoccupation with his Christian beliefs. As an author, his beliefs were visible.

He claims it was not his intention to turn *Narnia* into a Christian allegory:

"Some people seem to think that I began by asking myself how I could say something about Christianity to children; then fixed on the fairy tale as an instrument; then collected information about child-psychology and decided what age group I'd write for; then drew up a list of basic Christian truths and

¹² Overt to an adult reader, not necessarily to the intended reader.

hammered out ‘allegories’ to embody them. This is all pure moonshine”
[Lewis in Freshwater:98].

He says rather that it started with a picture of a Faun, carrying an umbrella and that Aslan introduced himself into the story. He does admit that he wanted to share Christianity with children, and make it available to them in a medium that was accessible to them and that they could relate to. This was why fantasy worked so well in the telling of *The Chronicles*. It was also an “attempt ... to get past the ‘watchful dragons’ of religious piety and stereotyped responses” [Freshwater:99].

If Lewis had to retell the *Narnia* stories in the ‘real world’ they would be too abstract and pedantic for children. In *The Chronicles* the fantastical world is of great importance, which the title indicates, because it is what allows Lewis the freedom to express himself. Some of the concepts he uses are too abstract for children to grasp in reality, and are far more accessible and believable in fantasy.

The idea of resurrection for example: that a person could die and then come back to life is quite abstract. As a rule in our world, people cannot die and come back to life. If children believed this it would give them a false sense of what is possible in this world. That is why it is easier to express a concept like resurrection in fantasy, where the author makes up his own rules. Rules that a child learns and knows does not apply to his own world, his reality.

Symbolism in The Magician's Nephew:

The symbolism Lewis used to create this series is based on Christian fact. He takes aspects of biblical stories and incorporates them into this work. Regardless of whether

this is conscious or unconscious the symbols and Christian allegory are present. Tolkien once commented that his use of Christian elements “were too obvious”¹³.

The Narnia series clearly has a religious message¹⁴: that children should accept Jesus into their lives because He is our saviour. I will try to discuss all the symbols and Christian allegory used by Lewis in the telling of *The Magician's Nephew* to show that this is the logical conclusion.

Lewis uses two main symbols, around which his stories revolve, to reveal his message. One is Narnia, the world in which the stories take place. Lewis has created a world that bears an uncanny resemblance to Earth in Genesis. What he is trying to do is open up a space where he is able to give commentary on what happened on Earth and at the same time, what could happen if Earth accepted God. This world also shows that no matter how innocent and pure something is created, sin is always present. Lewis compares Narnia and Earth and tells of the battle between good and evil people face every day. He, however, turns this battle into an adventure that children can enjoy, at the same time confirming the victory of good over evil.

The second symbol, and the most important, is Aslan the lion. Without this character it would be impossible to identify the story as Christian allegory. It can only be called an allegory because Lewis has created a character and superimposed him onto a Christian story. The telling of the story of Aslan is comparable to the story of Christ.

But why did Lewis pick Aslan the lion? A lion is a strong, powerful animal that commands respect. It is also known as the king of the beasts. Lewis probably picked the lion for these specific reasons. Throughout *The Chronicles of Narnia* he inserts pointers, giving the reader clues to what he is trying to say. It is like piecing together a

¹³ From *CS Lewis and the Truth of Myth*, by Mark Edwards Freshwater

¹⁴ Insight and ideas gained from the reading of *CS Lewis and the Truth of Myth*, and *The Image of Man in CS Lewis*, by William White.

puzzle: the lion is the king of the beasts, so if Aslan is a lion then he is the king, which in turn means he represents the King – God/Christ in other words. The Bible also makes reference to God as a lion.

In the same way, he is the agent that creates Narnia out of nothing. Without much of a stretch of the imagination, Aslan represents God because he created the Earth from nothing.

Aslan also asks Digory to redeem himself by proving his loyalty to him and completing a task. When Digory completes the task Aslan heals his mother, a function only Jesus could perform.

(In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Aslan again appears as the figure of Jesus. He is betrayed by Edmund, sacrifices himself to the White Witch to save the children, and is then resurrected. And in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Aslan tells the children that he exists in their world too, only by another name. Here his presence could be compared with the Holy Spirit.)

Now if we accept that Aslan represents God then all the other imagery in turn, are Christian concepts.

The Story of Creation. When they arrive in Narnia, there is nothing, only darkness, but while they stand there a voice begins to sing:

“It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it... Then two wonders happened at the same moment. One was that the voice was suddenly joined by other voices... The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars... One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out – single stars, constellations, and planets... There were no clouds. The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time... And now something else was

happening... the sky began to turn grey. A light wind, very fresh, began to stir. The sky... grew steadily paler. You could see shapes of hills standing up dark against it... There was soon light enough for them to see one another's faces.”[pg.93]

This is followed by the appearance of earth or ground, rock and water, followed by trees, grass, flowers and rivers until the world is complete. On page 126 Aslan tells that the world is only seven hours old – the number of days it took to create the Earth. We know the lion created Narnia because, “[h]uge, shaggy, and bright, it stood facing the risen sun. Its mouth was wide open in song and it was about three hundred yards away.” Which again compared Aslan to God, for in the Bible, God created earth and sea, day and night, populated the earth with animals and then created man.

After Aslan created the animals, he touched two of each “two beavers among all the beavers, two leopards amongst all the leopards, one stag and one deer among all the deer, and leave the rest.” This is reminiscent of the Ark, when Noah had to pick two animals of each kind. Aslan here, however, is giving these animals the power of speech.

Shortly after this he approached the Cabby, calling him “Son”, and asked if he would like to live in Narnia. He offers him this honour because he knows the Cabby is a good man and knows he will be an even better man now that he is there. On page 92, when they arrive in Narnia the Cabby says:

“I think the best thing we could so to pass the time would be sing a ‘ymn... He struck up at once a harvest thanksgiving hymn...He had a fine voice and the children joined in; it was very cheering. Uncle Andrew and the Witch did not join in.”

Followed by the comment: “‘Glory be!... I’d ha’ been a better man all my life if I’d known there were things like this.’” [pg.94]. Aslan knows he is honest, and when the Cabby says he couldn’t stay there without his wife, Aslan magically brings his wife into Narnia and they are made the first king and queen of Narnia. As with Adam and Eve, the man came first followed by the woman, who would be his wife and live in the land he had created.

After this he turns to Digory and tells him what the task is he must perform to keep Narnia safe and make up for his sin of bringing the Witch into Narnia:

“Now the land of Narnia ends where the waterfall comes down, and once you have reached the top of the cliffs you will be out of Narnia and into the Western Wild. You must journey through those mountains till you find a green valley with a blue lake in it, walled round by mountains of ice. At the end of the lake there is a steep, green hill. On the top of that hill there is a garden. In the centre of that garden is a tree. Pluck an apple from that tree and bring it back to me.”[pg.133].

Unlike in the Garden of Eden, Digory is told to pick an apple, but he is under strict instructions to “*Come in by the gold gates or not at all, Take of my fruit for others or forbear, For those who steal or those who climb my wall shall find their heart’s desire and find despair*”[pg.146].

He may not eat the apple, but he is tempted firstly by the smell and the strange effect it has on him, and secondly by the Witch. Here are the characters not only in a garden with an apple tree, but evil is trying to convince the innocent to eat the apple and sin. Unlike in the bible, Digory does not give in to his temptation, even though his desire to help his mother was very strong. Aslan is already aware of this when he returns,

revealing his omniscience. Digory has been given a test of obedience and passes. This is important in the telling, because Lewis classifies children as good.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Lewis again uses biblical images in the telling of his story. Here he uses the Resurrection as part of the plot in his story.

Lewis also creates his characters to represent elements of Christianity. The Witch, Jadis, is the ultimate representation of evil, just as Aslan is the ultimate representation of good. She is responsible for destroying her own world and now is trying to corrupt a new world.

“But the Witch looked as if, in a way, she understood the music better than any one of them. Her mouth was shut, her lips were pressed together, and her fists were clenched. Ever since [Aslan’s] song began she had felt that this whole world was filled with a Magic different from hers and stronger. She hated it. She would have smashed that whole world, or all worlds, to pieces, if it would only stop singing.” [pg.95].

We know from her introduction that her power is used for evil and therefore if Aslan’s power is different from hers, it means his is good. She also recognises that the power of good is stronger than the power of evil. This sets the tone for the second book, which is reminiscent of the biblical concept that the devil may have won the fight but he hasn’t won the battle”. Even if evil does overcome for a while, good will be victorious.

The other character who is shown as evil is Uncle Andrew. Although he is not pure evil, he has chosen evil over good. He asserts this when he takes Jadis’s side, even when he sees she is only causing destruction. He too has a negative reaction to the singing, and when the animals try to talk to him he cannot hear them.

“Uncle Andrew stood trembling and swaying this way and that. He had never liked animals at the best of times, being usually rather afraid of them; and of course years of doing cruel experiments on animals had made him hate and fear them far more. ‘Now, sir,’ said the Bullfrog in a business-like way, ‘are you animal, vegetable, or mineral?’ That was what it really said; but all Uncle Andrew heard was ‘Gr-r-r-arrh-ow!’”[pg.119].

This represents how people who have not accepted Jesus cannot hear him, no matter how much he tries to communicate with them.

There is also a constant reference to the children as being “sons of Adam” and “daughters of Eve”. They are named this because they come from Earth where Adam and Eve are the origination of the Earth’s population. But it also allows one to make the biblical connection.

Ultimately Lewis doesn’t expect the child to understand the Christian symbolism, but he hopes it will make them susceptible to the possibility of a God and what he has done for us. He also wants them to return to the text when they are older, to reread it and then to grasp what it is he was saying.

MORALITY AND THE CHILD – THE DEBATE

There is one more important topic that needs to be looked at when considering fantasy stories for children, and that is morality. This topic has been referred to before but it will be dealt with more specifically here.

A child’s morality can be defined as knowing the difference between right and wrong. When children are young they do not understand the difference, they just accept

certain things as right and others as wrong. They know stealing or biting is wrong and saying “please” and “thank you” is right, they don’t understand why, unless it can be explained to them in a concrete, absolute manner.

As children get older their consciousness broadens, and their conscience develops, which is the time they begin to understand the difference between right and wrong. Because this is how children are exposed to the moral codes of society it is vital that children’s stories illustrate and provide insight into the difference between right and wrong. If there is an unclear distinction between good and bad or right and wrong, it could be hazardous to a child.

The *Harry Potter* stories and *The Chronicles of Narnia* are both fantasy stories, and although they are unrealistic – in that they are not possible – they still reflect the morality of society. Fantasy has the ability to do this because it “is the medium that reflects reality through unreality” [Haines:198]. Not only does it deliver commentary on life that could not otherwise be expressed, but it upholds set laws and rules.

In adult fantasy and science fiction an author can create a society where the moral codes are different, or even reversed, but not in children’s writing. It would be too confusing and ultimately cause fear in a child because it is new and something they couldn’t possibly understand. Presumably no children’s publisher would publish something they knew could have such a negative effect on children.

Because *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* have been so popular with children it is very important that they stand up to moral testing. If the morality of a book contradicts normal, socially acceptable standards then it would be right to ban such a book. But when testing the morality of children’s literature the only aspect that should be considered is whether or not it upholds the standards of right and wrong. Such tests should not ask whether or not the stories include magic or goblins and

fairies, or if they could ever happen in reality. These questions fall into other categories that have been mentioned before.

In the *Harry Potter* stories, there is a feeling that this distinction between right and wrong is perhaps not clear enough. Yet on inspection the reader can see that good overcomes evil in the final battle.

There are instances in the stories when it is difficult to know which are the good guys and which are the bad guys. In the *Philosopher's Stone*, for example, one does not guess Professor Quirrell is the antagonist until the final battle, but this is an element of a mystery/ adventure story. Harry and the reader are simultaneously solving the mystery of who is responsible for trying to steal the Philosopher's Stone. Harry comes up with his own suspects, like Professor Snape because he appears mean. This is a character judgement children would relate to because it corresponds with their knowledge of good and bad. But if the reader knew who the bad guy was in this situation, it would spoil the reading experience. Children are naturally perceptive and enjoy a good mystery.

Another possibility concerns punishment for breaking school rules. But Harry is always punished for breaking school rules – when he is caught. He is even disciplined after saving Hermione from the troll. He regularly has points deducted from Gryffindor and is even sent to the terrifying Forbidden Forest at 11pm for detention. When he is not caught it is not to encourage breaking the rules. Harry is never doing anything bad, his disobedience is for good, to solve the mystery or help someone. Harry is aware that he is breaking the rules and therefore he is not amoral, but his reasoning for doing so, is that if he doesn't solve the mystery no one will. Ultimately it is his instinct to do *good* that is responsible for breaking the rules. It is also a natural

trait of a child to be adventurous. And once again, it adds to the enjoyment to see if Harry will get caught or not. It is a natural impulse for any reader to anticipate his capture or escape.

Then there is the question of witchcraft and wizardry. The *Harry Potter* books have been banned from schools in several American states because of this issue, while Priests and Ministers have passed the book as enjoyable and harmless. Even members of Wiccan¹⁵ orders have commented that the book is good reading for children – not as a manual for teaching the art of Wicca.

To back this up, it has previously been established that Rowling uses nonsense words for her spells, and her potions consist of unlikely ingredients yielding unlikely results. When a reader considers the magic in these stories it is also noticeable that the children often do not get the spells right and it is these “...attempts at magic [that] make the Hogwarts wizards seem more human than supernatural and more childlike than adult”. [pg.195]. The most important aspect of Harry is his humanity, and he is after all a child. Magic is used here to reveal the characters humanity, not to teach children how to practise magic. If they wanted to learn they certainly wouldn't follow Neville Longbottom's example, or even Harry's who can't get a feather to float. Their magic shows that they are just like any ordinary child.

The school Harry attends, Hogwarts, is a school of Witchcraft and Wizardry, but it is also a school that teaches its learners the difference between right and wrong. This can be concluded because one of the subjects that the first years must take is “Defence against the Dark Arts”. The Dark Arts are the negative, bad side of magic; not something Hogwarts teaches its learners. They teach the learners instead to protect themselves against it, and to prevent them being turned to do evil. This is the same

¹⁵ Modern day witches that use nature as their inspiration and power.

way regular schools would teach, for example, children not to steal. They are warned of the potential dangers and taught the difference between right and wrong.

Rowling does not exclude the presence of the Dark Arts and the possibility that some wizards may be enticed by it because that would be unrealistic. There is always good and always evil. She does, however, tell the reader that Hogwarts teaches their learners in a moral environment and that the children learn to do good (that they practise magic is of little consequence).

There is no actual proof that Rowling encourages witchcraft as a practice in the real world. Technically, Harry could have had the same adventures in the “real world”, but if Rowling were to recreate it in a realistic setting the story wouldn’t be as rich nor as original. Hence the use of a magical setting. The type of magic she talks about in her books is quite different to the magic practised in reality; hers is a fantasy magic that could only serve characters in a fantasy story.

It is farfetched to call these stories satanic. Satanism refers to the worship of the devil and nowhere can this element be found. Furthermore, the children have been raised in contemporary England and unless Satanism is a general practice with Muggles then they have never been introduced to it, let alone practise it. Although in the Muggle world there is no mention of going to church, one can assume, as regular children and adults, it would be an observed practise. Harry also attended a human/ Muggle school before attending Hogwarts and therefore would have been exposed to Muggle morals – right and wrong.

There is no clear indication that Harry is in an immoral environment and therefore neither are the readers. Harry knows the difference between right and wrong and this difference is highlighted many times in the book. The Dursley’s are bad because they

mistreat Harry, Draco Malfoy is bad because he insults Ron and steals Neville's Remembrall, Voldemort is bad because he killed Harry's parents and Professor Quirrell is bad because he is helping Voldemort and trying to steal the Philosopher's Stone. None of the protagonists in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* condone any of these acts. So it can be concluded that *Harry Potter* stories are not a threat to a child's morality.

In *The Chronicles of Narnia* the distinction between right and wrong is obvious. Because the story is underpinned with the religious aspects, the writer is clearly trying to show the reader right from wrong. It is also an indication to adults that the message is moral.

From the children's first encounter with Jadis they know she is evil. She is responsible for all the destruction and wrongdoing in Narnia. Aslan on the other hand is good, not in as much that he does good things while Jadis does bad, but that the children like him and *feel* that he is good. The reader shares this feeling – one of the most invaluable tools a child has.

Lewis chose a fantasy setting because it was the only way to make his message accessible to children, but in doing so he also had magic and fantastical creatures at his disposal. In each story there is mention of a different magical creature, and Jadis becomes known as the White Witch. Here the connotation of witch is evil, even Uncle Andrew is bad and he is the Magician in *The Magician's Nephew*, but this is connected to their personalities not their titles. The term "witch" also has a history of being used as a derogatory word and in this case labels her as such, she is a bad person so she is a witch, she isn't called a witch because she does spells and rides on a broomstick. In *Harry Potter* witches are seen in a different light. Witches and wizards

are the population of the non-Muggle world and are just like everyday people. Once again it is their personalities that define them, not the fact that they are witches.

Even though Lewis's story is filled with Christian symbolism and can be read as a Christian allegory, he still uses the concept of magic in his stories and not as exclusively good or bad. Jadis is called a witch because she is evil and has magical powers. Aslan, on the other hand, who is good, also has magical powers. How else could he have created Narnia and turned Strawberry into a flying horse? His magic is interpreted as good magic. So by assuming that the use of magic in children's literature is bad is ignoring an author's poetic licence, a child's imagination and the author's message.

Magic therefore cannot be interpreted as either good or bad, it is the author's intention that categorises its purpose. Neither *Harry Potter* nor *The Chronicles of Narnia* use magic or witches and wizards to turn children away from their accepted morality.

The morality in *The Chronicle's of Narnia* is clearly established, but one must be careful when considering the Christian allegory in this regard. One must bear in mind that not all children follow the same religion and this book may confuse children. Most religions have a story of creation where a Creator made the Earth. There are also many parallel Old Testament beliefs, but the events in the New Testament aren't always shared so to impose one set of beliefs on a child through a children's story could be problematic.

At the same time, however, one must realise that this is the last thing on a child's mind when engrossed in reading. Children should be able to read for fun, not to have to find meaning. As Peter Schakel writes in his book *Reading with the Heart: The*

Way Into Narnia, “children should be left to enjoy [The Chronicles]¹⁶ imaginatively and emotionally, without being asked to reflect upon [its] significance... out of that enjoyment ‘meaning’ will come” [Schakel:135].

To impose adult morality on children is expecting something from children they cannot offer. A child is oblivious to adult reasoning. Even though a child can absorb symbolism and deeper meaning, she isn’t aware that she has. Children are very susceptible to mood and tone so often they can feel something going on underneath the surface of the story. But children don’t read *Harry Potter* as more than a humorous mystery about a wizard in training, or *Narnia* as a Bible story instead of an adventure story that takes place on a world they have never been to. Because they don’t project adult concepts onto their reading material, they read what is written for enjoyment, for its literary value, not its religious value. This is something adults need to appreciate, children are innocent and naïve and can experience a book “imaginatively and emotionally” without theorising or dissecting it.

Because these are children’s stories the morality is simple, right is good, wrong is bad, good conquers evil. This is enough to satisfy a child’s morality. At the end of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and *The Magician’s Nephew* a child is not left asking questions. This confirms that these books correspond with a child’s experience of the world and are morally sound.

¹⁶ But not only *The Chronicles*, any book meant for children.

TO BE A CHILD AGAIN

After discussing all the elements that make *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* successful children's literature, there is one final question that needs to be asked: How can we be sure these books are good literature?

The simplest answer is - aside from original content, the presence of literary techniques, symbolism, style and message - that it appeals to adults as well.

It has been established that children connect with this literature because of their strong link with fantasy, because the psyche of the characters are in sync with their own, that it has literary value, and that it meets a child's emotional, imaginative and moral needs.

Sometimes this literature meets with disapproval from the adult community, but this disapproval on the whole is small. Returning to the section titled "The building blocks of fantasy in children" as evidence, most adults enjoy fantasy. It plunges them back into a world that they once knew and enjoy experiencing again. But these books aren't successful because they are fantasy but because they are superbly created and written, and correspond flawlessly with the world of the child.

As an adult, a reader is now able to differentiate between good and bad literature, or more specifically good and harmful literature: thanks to the emotional training they gained as children, combined with their understanding, reasoning abilities and logic they have gained since childhood. So if adults can enjoy these books then they have succeeded as good literature.

THE TEST OF TIME

Well-crafted literature transcends age and can appeal to everyone, which is exactly what JK Rowling and CS Lewis succeeded in doing with these two series. Although *The Chronicles of Narnia* are classics, they have ageless appeal. Adults who read these stories as children still love them today. In the same way *Harry Potter* has found popularity amongst young and old readers and will be a classic in its own right. The mark of good literature is that it survives in the imagination of its readers and in the memory of generations. *The Chronicles of Narnia* have already made a mark on literature in that it is still remembered today, 50 years later. Time will tell if the same can be said for *Harry Potter*.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this dissertation has established that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *The Magician's Nephew* do in fact succeed as good fantasy literature for children.

The questions posed at the outset have been discussed and answered. The fantasy worlds created in the two series – looking specifically at *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *The Magician's Nephew* – links with the reader's experience of fantasy. Because of the child's emotional use of fantasy in play, fantasy is not out of place in a child's world. A child accepts the possibility of fantasy more readily than adults because they use it readily and have not yet made the complete distinction between fantasy and reality, nor do they have to.

The books also correspond with the child's psyche. The stories do not enter territory beyond the grasp of children. Children are able to find a commonality between

themselves and the characters, making it easier for them to immerse themselves into the story. And because they can relate to the characters they enjoy the reading experience even more.

Added to this is the successful creation of two completely unique fantasy worlds in which the stories take place. There may be a break from reality, but not a break from the reality in the fantasy, therefore making the worlds believable. Because fantasy is an imaginatively stimulating genre it enables children to actively take part in creating the story, which enhances the reading experience.

As with all literature, these stories had to follow certain rules. There had to be a plot, a setting, dialogue, rounded and flat characters etc, but other items were also present such as symbolism, humour and specialised language usage. These elements, when considered in terms of literary techniques, cannot be flawed. Their presence confirms that they can be studied as literary works and not just children's stories.

The allegory in *The Magician's Nephew* (and other parts of the series) does make it a more evolved series than *Harry Potter* because there are multiple readings of it, but it does not make it a superior text. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* can stand on its own as fantasy fiction for children, without added meaning, and deliver the message that good overcomes evil.

This answers the final question of whether or not the story upholds the child's knowledge of right and wrong. Although there has been some debate, both stories offer proof that they are in fact moral and do not undermine the reader's ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

Having taken these questions and their answers into account one can be confident in ruling that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *The Magician's Nephew* are good fantasy for children, as well as being successful literature for child readers.

ADDENDUM:

Period before this: Lifetime of first physical change¹⁷

5 ½ - 6 ½

- a) This is a period of physical growth
- b) Child's appearance starts to change – arms become longer, ears become larger etc.
- c) Child no longer just looks at pictures in books and their reference, but colours too. Child can now identify specific characteristics and notice exceptions
- d) The world gets bigger – more to it than what they thought
- e) Child develops independent urges
- f) Still egocentric and self-absorbed but now has naïve objectivity
- g) Extroversion takes over, causing tension between extroversion and introversion
- h) Child is irrational and emotionally unstable due to changes within him/her
- i) Struggle to be a “big kid” when still a “little kid”. Child in a vacuum between the two phases.

¹⁷ As interpreted from the work and teaching of Dr Lydia Snyman.

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